



The Public Defender's Anti-Violence Initiative

Message from Carlos J. Martinez, Public Defender

The Anti-Violence Initiative (AVI) was created as an effective means for addressing the medical, psychological, developmental and substance abuse problems that plague so many of our clients and interfere with their rehabilitation -- not to mention the danger these maladies pose to our community.

Humanitarian and public safety aspects aside, AVI makes good practical sense because prevention is less expensive than the alternatives! Paying attention to problems up front certainly beats paying the price later for higher crime rates, human suffering, and recidivism.

In many of the approximate 100,000 cases this office handles each year, our clients have showed that they can be successfully treated if their needs are properly identified and addressed by effective programs. The AVI program makes it possible for clients to resume leading law-abiding lives, through sentencing options that rely on access to effective treatment.

The focus of AVI is on public defender/community collaborations that improve public safety, government accountability and reduction in the number of crime victims. AVI activities are primarily undertaken by volunteers from my office and our partner organizations, and are not funded through the Public Defender's Office.

The AVI is designed to improve individual case outcomes and public safety through research-based prevention and treatment methods. This means encouraging federal, state and local governments to fund effective programs and discontinue funding for ineffective programs that consume scarce resources and are detrimental to public defender clients.

As a complement to the traditional criminal justice focus of indigent defense, the AVI emphasizes proven public health approaches. AVI promotes holistic, constructive, research-based prevention and treatment methods in order to produce meaningful, lasting change in clients' lives, consistent with the defense function.

Serving the best interests of indigent clients not only safeguards constitutional rights, but promotes public safety. Public defender clients and our community are best served when, in addition to defending the liberty interests of clients, the community provides them with the tools necessary to become taxpayers, rather than tax-takers.

The objective of the Anti-Violence Initiative is to promote:

- Case disposition and sentence planning that actually benefits clients and their families by doing more than simply processing paperwork in the criminal justice system
- The creation of sentencing alternatives to incarceration that, because of their effectiveness, are attractive to judges and prosecutors

- Legal and programmatic changes that improve prevention and treatment of criminal conduct
- Research to increase understanding of the positive and negative personal and environmental factors at the root of most violent and criminal conduct, and how these factors are at play in the lives of clients and
- Criminal Justice system and community awareness of sound and cost-effective crime prevention methods and responses to criminal conduct

As part of the AVI, employees volunteer for community activities and the office serves as a catalyst for systemic improvements through initiatives such as:

Juvenile Justice System

- Working with the legislature' s House Select Committee on Juvenile Detention Centers, the State Attorney' s Office, Miami Dade County, the Juvenile Justice Board, the Dade Miami Criminal Justice Council and the Miami Dade Youth Crime Task Force to improve the deplorable conditions at the Juvenile Detention Center. For a list of grand jury recommendations, [click here](#).
- Establishing a unique partnership with the “ seed” aspect of the Miami-Dade Weed and Seed program, that provided after-school computer and leadership training to delinquent youth
- Developing and implementing a program that resulted in a 70% reduction in the number of children transferred from juvenile to adult court, and improved sentencing advocacy for juveniles charged as adults
- Sponsoring a national conference that focused on effective juvenile programs, crime prevention and sentencing alternatives for juveniles transferred to adult court
- Partnering with the University of Miami Department of Psychology, which conducts long-term behavioral and academic research into juvenile intervention and treatment programs
- Partnering with the Miami-Dade County Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Art in Public Places and local artists on the [ArtCARE](#) project, a collaborative mural and art exhibit designed to expose incarcerated youth to the arts and engage them in constructive behavior, and educate the public about impact of prosecuting youth in adult court

Mental Health and Substance Abuse

- Partnering with the University of Miami Center for Family Studies and Center for Treatment Research on Adolescent Drug Abuse to provide Brief Strategic Family Therapy and Multi-Dimensional Family Therapy, family oriented substance abuse treatment to juvenile clients in their homes
- Partnering with Florida International University' s Community Based Intervention Research Group to obtain a \$5 million grant and refer Hispanic and African-American adolescents and their families who have alcohol and drug problems

Civil and Educational Rights

- Partnering with the Miami-Dade Community Relations Board, government agencies, the school system, and community activists to host a series of Community Dialogues focused on breaking the cycle from school failure into juvenile delinquency
- Developing the Public Defender [Redemption Project](#), an all-volunteer collaboration with numerous civic groups, that has helped more than 2000 former clients seal their criminal records or apply to restore their civil rights pursuant to state law
- Founding Lawyers and Advocates for Special Education Advocacy, a group that conducts workshops and roundtable discussions to promote special education services for youth involved in the Juvenile Justice System

Community Outreach

- Bringing nationally recognized violence prevention experts to Miami-Dade to foster the creation of effective local programs
- Securing a grant to provide permanent, affordable housing (at Camillus House Somerville Apartments) to homeless women with children
- Establishing the [Tools for Tomorrow Project](#), through which the office donates its outdated computers and equipment to community-based, faith and other non-profit organizations that provide educational and rehabilitation services to clients and their families and
- Providing volunteer mentors for at-risk youth through [Big Brothers/Big Sisters](#)

Employment Information	Phone Numbers	Florida Bar Referrals
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